

Draft Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change

Scottish Government

March 2021

1(a) - What are your views on the three objectives underpinning our approach to engagement on climate change?

Age Scotland welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Public Engagement Strategy for Climate Change. We agree the objectives of the engagement activity are sensible. An inclusive and clear communications strategy will be vital to ensure older people are aware of action being taken to tackle climate change and what they can do to help. Enabling older people's participation in policy design on the issue will ensure no one is left behind in attempts to address the climate emergency. It is essential that older people are supported and empowered to act on climate change within their daily lives and local communities.

2(a) - What are your views on our seven principles for public engagement set out in Box 1?

Age Scotland welcomes the inclusive principle of the public engagement to be undertaken. Grassroots organisations and local community groups will be particularly important to target and involve hard to reach groups within these communities.

4. What are your views on the opportunities and challenges for public engagement in the Green Recovery?

There is currently a low level of engagement with energy efficiency measures, as many members of the public do not know about these or understand the changes required. 55% of those surveyed in Age Scotland's National Housing Survey Report 2020 were unaware of any of the Government schemes to assist with energy efficiency measures.¹ We also know that many older people on low and fixed incomes struggle to afford their energy bills. Indeed, 27% of older households are experiencing fuel poverty, compared to 17% of families.² Additionally, 37% of extreme fuel poor households are older households.³

The Scottish Government must do more to make this policy area more accessible and boost awareness of the various schemes and support available. The Scottish Government will also need to ensure they engage with older people who live in remote and rural areas,

¹ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/our-impact/policy-and-research/political-briefings/national-housing-survey/>

² <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-house-condition-survey-2019-key-findings/>

³ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-house-condition-survey-2019-key-findings/>

who are more likely to be living in fuel poverty.⁴ There is a clear opportunity to boost engagement with this group and lead to positive outcomes.

By engaging with whole communities on tackling climate change, the Scottish Government also has the chance to encourage intergenerational working. Intergenerational approaches can reduce negative attitudes towards older and younger people and help people of all ages feel more engaged in contributing to their communities.

5. What are your views on our approach to communicating climate change policy?

Age Scotland welcomes the Scottish Government's commitment to inclusive communication. It is essential that communication around the climate emergency does not take place solely via digital means. While 66% of over 60s do have access to the internet, there is still a significant number of older people who are not online – whether by choice or due to barriers in accessibility or affordability.⁵ A communications strategy which includes print media, television, and radio, as well as other alternative methods such as braille, easy read, and various translations is essential to ensure awareness among this group of Scottish Government policy and action on climate change.

Age Scotland also welcomes the acknowledgement that further awareness raising is required about options available to improve energy efficiency and zero emissions heating systems. As outlined above, this lack of awareness is something our research on housing has found.⁶

We support a broad network of local community groups. If required, Age Scotland could help facilitate the joined-up communications and engagement aim of the strategy through this network.

7. What are your views on our approach to enabling participation in policy design?

Age Scotland supports the Scottish Government's aim to reach people and audiences who have not been engaged with on the topic of climate change previously. As Scotland's population is ageing at a faster rate than the rest of the UK⁷, ensuring older people are engaged in the design and delivery of policies on climate change will be vital to effect meaningful change.

There can sometimes be an incorrect perception that older people are uninterested in tackling the climate emergency. However, in an Age Scotland poll carried out as part of our engagement ahead of the forthcoming Scottish Parliament election, 82% of respondents said improving the environment and tackling climate change were either very important (60%) or quite important (22%) to them. This is backed up by findings from the Scottish

⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-house-condition-survey-2019-key-findings/>

⁵ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-household-survey-2019-key-findings/pages/9/>

⁶ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/scotland/our-impact/policy-and-research/political-briefings/national-housing-survey/>

⁷ <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/population/population-projections/population-projections-scotland/2018-based>

Household Survey 2019 that 68% of people aged 60-74 and 56% of over 75s viewed climate change as an immediate and urgent problem (both increases of 10% from 2018 respectively).⁸ By engaging extensively with older people as part of the climate change strategy, the Scottish Government can tackle this incorrect perception and harness the experience and skills of this significant section of the population.

We welcome the inclusive approach taken to membership selection of Scotland's Climate Assembly, which is representative of age and other protected characteristics, geographical location, and income level. It is important to give everyone a chance to engage on this vital topic. As the Scottish Government plans to organise further climate conversations, we would argue that there is an opportunity to hold a conversation which focuses on the older population. There have been similar youth workshops already. As mentioned previously, Age Scotland is willing to facilitate engagement with older people through our network of member groups. In addition to this more targeted engagement with older people, older people must continue to be involved in other ongoing conversations on the issue including representatives from across society.

The intention to carry out further Just Transition engagement activities with groups who will be impacted by the transition to net-zero is welcome. Older workers in industries such as oil and gas must be included in these activities and given opportunities to re-train and acquire new skills. This is vital, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, as older workers who lose their jobs are less likely to secure re-employment, or to find a job of a similar quality, than younger workers.⁹

9. What are your views on our approach to encouraging action?

We welcome the Scottish Government's intention to support communities and groups to take positive action as well as empowering individual action by increasing climate literacy. Many older people are highly invested and active in their local communities, groups, and clubs. The Scottish Government should attempt to capture and build on their involvement in relation to this work, while ensuring those older people who are not already participating in such activity are also targeted.

Public transport, and in particular bus services, is an area which requires continued investment by local authorities and the Scottish Government. If people are being asked to reduce their car journeys, the infrastructure to enable this must be available, particularly in rural locations. Many older people are frequent bus users, but one barrier which Age Scotland hears about is the lack of services.¹⁰ We expect the COVID-19 pandemic has meant fewer older people have been using public transport. However, for those without access to a car, and since car-sharing has been prohibited for much of the pandemic for public health reasons, public transport is often the only option. Nevertheless, we anticipate there may need to be a campaign to instil public confidence in public transport services once the pandemic is over as well as significant investment in services. Infrastructure

⁸ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-household-survey-2019-annual-report/pages/11/>

⁹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/partnership-action-for-continuing-employment-clients-over-50/>

¹⁰ <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-scotland/documents/policy-and-research/age-scotland---transport-scotland---nts-review---july-2019.pdf>

which allows older people to walk more – including benches, handrails, good street light provision, access to public toilets, pavements which are in good condition and adequate pedestrian crossings – is also needed to improve accessibility and encourage active travel.

As the Big Climate Conversation's findings showed, there is a belief that older people have valuable knowledge and skills for a zero-waste society, which many people feel should be reintroduced as life skills in schools. These include mending and repairing clothes, growing produce gardens and cooking meals from scratch.¹¹ There is an opportunity to promote intergenerational working by incorporating this knowledge into action.

11. How do you think COP26 can help deliver a positive legacy for people of Scotland and climate action?

Age Scotland agrees that an inclusive COP26 will have a positive outcome for Scotland.

¹¹ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/report-findings-big-climate-conversation/>